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MARKETING PLAN FOR A DIGITAL B-TO-B LANGUAGE EDUCATION SERVICE

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ABSTRACT

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This Bachelor's thesis was a commissioned by a company chief executive officer (CEO) of a German digital language education company operating on an international business-to-customer field that aimed to expand its business operations by performing an entrance to European business-to-business (b-to-b) digital language education market.

Objective of the thesis was to develop a marketing plan and outlines of a new digital language learning service for b-to-b customers inside the European market area, which would enable performing a successful market penetration with limited amount of resources. The marketing plan consists of analyses of prevailing micro and macro environments, which were used as a foundation for a new marketing strategy and tactics. The new service features were optimized according strategy and tactics provided by the new marketing plan and enforced by the environmental factors that were revealed during the analyses.

Working history of the Author in the commissioning company and consultation from the CEO gave the author a clear image over the existing state of affairs of the commissioning company. Information and theoretical foundation of the thesis is based on the relevant literature and digital materials, about various concepts such as latest trends of the industry, business developing methods, digital marketing and data about the prevailing market environment. Theoretical framework of the marketing plan consisted of analyzing both macro and micro environmental factors by using analyses such as PESTEL and SWOT, on which the strategy was then founded, and then Extended Marketing Mix was used in defining the most suitable marketing tactics. The Lean Startup is the dominant new product development methodology in the commissioning company. Therefore, in order to make the future research and development of the topic easier, the new service was designed in a compatible way with the dominant methodology.

Main results of the thesis were ready marketing plan including optimized marketing strategy, marketing tactics and a list of business development methods for optimizing the existing processes and services regarding the new business-to-business market environment and the capabilities of the commissioning company.

Keywords: Marketing Plan, Web Service, B2B, SWOT, PESTEL, Extended Marketing Mix, Lean Startup

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1 INTRODUCTION

The digital language education field is a growing market (PR Newswire 2015, date of retrieval 10.03.2016), where new innovative ways of combining latest digital technology with linguistic educational interests are defining new trend leaders and where century old educational institutions lean on their old brands for attracting great masses of paying students. Regardless of the fierce competition, the market is as big as the digitalized world, growth of which is fueled by the globalization, urbanization, increase of the amount of handheld digital devices, also known as a mobile movement, and shifting of the economic center of the world from West to East. The business-to-business market of digital language education is affected significantly by the globalizing world, where multilingualism is becoming a norm and the restrictions regarding the movement of the workforce and capital have been reduced dramatically. Whereas public institutions have been relatively slow to adapt to the brave new digital world of language education, private institutions and consumers have welcomed the combination of new technology and education with open arms.

A chief executive officer (CEO) of a Germany-based digital language education startup commissioned the thesis from the author. Purpose of the thesis was to provide the commissioning company with a well-founded marketing plan for a European b-to-b market entry and to consider the required attributes of the new digital language service regarding the current situation on the digital education field, on internal, competitor and customer sides of the big picture.

Research question of the thesis was to determine what kind of elements should be considered in marketing regarding the market entry. Supportive questions were set to seek the answers regarding development of the new service, current company practices, optimal marketing strategy, practical marketing tactics and the most efficient branding strategies for the market in question and the prevailing business environment of the commissioning company.

Marketing plan follows partially the framework provided by Kotler and Keller (2006, 60). Whereas the original plan consists of five major parts: Executive summary, situation analysis, marketing strategy, financial projections and implementation controls, in this marketing plan the financial projections and budgeting are excluded from the marketing plan, due the nature of the commission and limited amount of accessible information. Instead, the emphasis was placed on the sit-

uation analysis, marketing strategy and adapting the revealed information in new service development. Executive Summary referred in the 12th edition of Marketing Management (2006, 60) was covered at the end of the study as a part of the conclusions and therefore does not require a chapter of its own.

The structure of the thesis begun with a situation analysis, including some relevant information about the commissioning company and the state of competition on both b-to-b and b-to-c sides of the digital education field. Then a PESTEL analysis was conducted to cover the macro environment followed by a partially overlapping SWOT analysis, where both micro and macro -economic factors of the company are considered in connection with the business-to-business market entry. The situation analysis was followed by definitions of new marketing and branding strategies. The definition of the marketing strategy was addressed to define clear marketing mission and objectives for the new digital education service, whereas the branding strategy was addressed to define guidelines on how to establish a strong brand among competitors of the field. Then the marketing tactics are established and validated by utilizing an Extended Marketing Mix tool. In the last part of the thesis the new service properties were defined, based on the validated findings of the analyses and conducted market research.

In this thesis, the principles of the Lean Startup were the cornerstone in developing both the marketing tactics and a new service features. The Lean Startup of Eric Ries (2011) is a business development methodology designed originally for the high-tech startup environment of the Silicon Valley in 2008. The origins of the lean methodology are in the revolutionary Japanese post-war Toyota Production System (TPS) and Lean Manufacturing, which focused on making continuous efforts to reduce wasteful activities in production (Business Dictionary 2016, date of retrieval 04.05.2016). In Lean Startup, constant improvements to the product or service are done by using a Build-Measure-Learn feedback loop, instead of making complex plans that are based on numerous assumptions regarding demand or characteristics of the service. All processes in a startup environment based on this operating method aim to achieve the most validated learning in the shortest possible time, whereas everything else wasteful was diminished to the minimum. The Lean Startup thinking encourages first to find the current marketing opportunities through problem detection method and then respond to the revealed opportunities or problems. These improvements are carried out in small patches instead of conventional resource heavy and risky product launches. Although, not all of the properties could be validated with both actual customers and literary sources, due the lack of resources and time, utilizing the same methodology with the

commissioning institution should make the future development and implementation of the new b-to-b language training service easier.

2 SITUATION ANALYSIS

According to a definition of situation analysis given by Kotler and Keller, the situation analysis consists of relevant background data about the market, competitors and the macro environmental forces. The definition of the market should include specific details, such as how big is the market and how fast is it growing and insights about the current trends and developments and situation of the company and readiness relating to those. (2006, 60.) Therefore, in this chapter, both prevalent internal and external environments are analyzed, in order to be adapted later for forming new marketing tactics and strategy. In practice, this was done first by giving general information about the commissioning company, then by observing the competition on the field and performing a PESTEL analysis in order to observe the external environment. As a final part of this chapter, a SWOT analysis was performed for establishing a big picture of all the business environmental factors.

2.1 General information about the commissioning company

The commissioner of the thesis is a Germany-based digital language school, a registered name of which was not published in this thesis, which operates on an international digital business-to-customer education market. The commissioning company is a successor of German digital tutoring platform founded in 2011. Currently the company employs about 30 employees working from offices in Germany, Spain, Switzerland and Belgium, excluding numerous teachers who work as freelancers through the digital teaching platform from varying geographical locations. The main operating area of the company is Europe and most of the marketing efforts are being directed towards the European market, however as the company operates online, the customers and teachers may originate outside of the Europe and the main operating area. Suppliers of the company consist of numerous freelancer teachers and a domain provider company named GoDaddy Operating Company LLC, which was included in a list of the 10 best domain-hosting services in 2016 (Domain Hosting Services Reviews 2016, date of retrieval 16.05.2016).

The product portfolio of the commissioning company consists of digital language courses to all levels and various different themes, such as “German for travelling”, “English pronunciation” or “French for beginner”, in about 20 different languages. Customers come in all sizes, so to say,

however majority of them are under 30 years of age, probably due to the higher adaptation of digital education, commerce and technology itself. Even though the young generation tends to be more talented in using, or at least adapting, the digital devices (Nickson C. 2015, date of retrieval 17.05.2016), using the service of commissioning company does not require wide technical expertise and customer service guides every customer through the process.

The core business concept of the commissioning company is to connect the supply and demand in the field of digital language education regardless of the geographical distances and to offer a multifunctional digital teaching platform, with an able customer support service and a reliable payment system that allows international transactions.

2.2 Competitors

According to an industry research report by an independent tech-focused global research institution Sandler Research referred by PR Newswire, the key players of the global online language learning market are: Linguatronics LC, Pearson plc, Sanako Corp., SANS Inc. and TLS Communication GmbH. In addition, other mentioned prominent service providers are Edusoft, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, Macmillan Education, McGraw Hill Education, OK-panda, Onwards Learning, Oxford University Press, Rosetta Stone, Sanoma and Voxy. (2015, date of retrieval 10.03.2016.) On the b-to-b digital language training market companies such as Rosetta Stone, Education First, Transparent, Berlitz and Speexx are the biggest competitors.

2.3 PESTEL analysis

PESTEL analysis is a macro-environmental analysis and monitoring tool, which is intended to draw an attention to external factors that may affect the business operations of an organization (Professional Academy 2016, date of retrieval 09.05.2016). PESTEL is a mnemonic that refers to six parts of the analysis: political, economic, social, technological, environmental and legal.

2.3.1 Political

The European political and economic environment is in the turmoil with the migrant situation (Jenkins N. 2016, date of retrieval 10.05.2016); this however cannot be predicted to affect the

business operations of the company negatively. On the contrary, the increasing amount of foreign people require an increasing amount of language education institutions. This could offer a great opportunity for public relations (PR) campaign where the company would educate few groups of immigrants to learn the local language and write about their stories in social media, with an emphasis of the benefits that the new language has brought to them.

2.3.2 Economic

Economy of the European Union is currently on its fourth year of sluggish recovery as it has failed in reaching substantial results in both reducing unemployment and reviving investments (European Economic Forecast 2016. Date of retrieval 17.05.2016). As the economies and average salaries of the European Union member states are still far from being equal and there is not a rapid change on sight, the commissioning company should enjoy the benefits of providing a low-cost education from Eastern and Southern EU countries to Central and Nordic Europe with a profitable margin.

Targeting the Europe is a natural choice for the commissioning company, as that is the area most familiar and reachable for the founders of the company. However, according to the data provided by the Eurostat and referred by the Economist, when compared to other geographical locations on average, the percentage that European households are spending on education is much smaller (The Economist 2015, date of retrieval 10.05.2016).

2.3.3 Social

After investigating the demographics of Europe and their possible effects on the business, author could not find anything relevant for the business operations of the commissioner. If the population growth will follow the current trend, it will increase slowly until 2050, when a peak is reached and then begin to decline on a slow pace, despite of the immigration on a current rate (European Commission 2015, date of retrieval 10.05.2016). Europe is still struggling with high unemployment rates (European Economic Forecast 2016. Date of retrieval 17.05.2016), which could affect desirability of education and movement of people inside the EU. Both of these factors would have a positive impact on the business operations of the commissioning company.

2.3.4 Technological

Advances in technology are constant and new ways of utilizing them in education are likely being developed by public language education institutions and competitors mentioned in the competition analysis. Technology driven trends that have an effect on the digital learning industry, such as a gamification and the mobile movement that are covered later as a part of SWOT analysis have been ongoing for years, whereas mainstream virtual reality (VR) technology is at the time of writing preparing for a breakthrough (Fildes N. 2015, date of retrieval 10.05.2016). As a natural response for the growth of the market, numerous new companies, such as Alchemy VR, zSpace and Immersive VR Education, are developing their VR based learning products (Bailiff L. & Reede E. 2016, date of retrieval 10.05.2016).

2.3.5 Environmental

A status of an environmentally and ethically sustainable company is always worth investing in for PR, ethical and financial reasons. For a digital service provider, it is relatively easy to become environmentally conscious as reducing the ecological footprint of business operations does not require extensive investments. Some methods to consider are the reducing the power consumption of office computers, recycling the trash, cut on the usage of paper in the office and demand environmental standards from the domain provider or other suppliers and cooperating companies henceforth.

2.3.6 Legal

When offering an international b-to-b service inside EU, the taxation has to be considered carefully, preferably with a tax advisor, as the legislation of value added taxes on digitally transmitted education is complicated and contradictory. However, it is to be noted that according to PwC review of *changes to VAT registration for digitized services* (PwC 2014, date of retrieval 19.04.2016) the business operations of the commissioning company currently should not be considered to be an electronically supplied service, because learning is not automated and still requires human interaction. This however may change in the future.

2.4 SWOT analysis

The overall analysis of a company's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats is a way of observing its internal and external marketing environment (Kotler & Keller 2006, 52). The monitoring of prevalent macroeconomic forces and microeconomic factors affect capability of a company to earn profits as they enable recognizing trends and important developments in the industry. In this thesis, the SWOT analysis was carried out on a company level. As a demonstration, the author collected main findings of the SWOT analysis in Figure 2.

	POSITIVE	NEGATIVE
INTERNAL	STRENGTHS Cost efficiency Low level of bureaucracy Multilingual customer support Extensive teacher database Experience in the digital language learnin market	WEAKNESSES Lack of funding for sustainable marketing Lack of standardization Internal communications Freelancer status of the teachers Lack of talent in developing the marketing and developing the digital platform
EXTERNAL	OPPORTUNITIES Growing language learning market Gamification Mobile movement	THREATS Well-established competitors Information security

Figure 1. SWOT matrix

2.4.1 Strengths

As Eric Ries, the father of the Lean Startup defines a startup: “A *startup* is a human institution designed to create a new product or service under conditions of extreme uncertainty” (Ries 2011, 30) However, uncertainty should be considered as a weakness only if the management fails to make it something that will drive the institution forward. As a small-scale corporation, the commissioning company has a low level of bureaucracy and therefore it possesses an ability to adapt and react to sudden changes.

The commissioning company has an ability to offer the language courses on a considerably lower pricing than most of its competitors, because of the marginal running costs of the business and the way the teachers are contracted as freelancers from various countries.

Customer service of the commissioning company has the ability to support over 15 European languages, which is quite an impressive achievement for such a small-scale business. Commissioning company has an existing experience on organizing business-to-customer digital tutoring and language teaching, which means that the b-to-b service deployed, as it was planned in the thesis, will not require great organizational changes or introducing new tasks for the workforce.

The extensive teacher database of the company is definitely a strength, which makes future up-scaling of the service plausible.

Personalization of the course ingredients is a major strength of the service that should be emphasized. It creates a competitive advantage and gives a rational reason to increase the pricing, even if it causes heavier operating costs, due to increased workload for the contract teachers.

2.4.2 Weakness

Based on the own first-hand experience of the author, the current low level of investment towards marketing efforts affects the business performance and sustainability of business operations of the company. Commissioning company is relatively young on its business and newcomer in b-to-b digital language education field, making the marketing function vital for the future success of the business.

As a former employee of the commissioning company, author could identify an internal weakness in lack of standard operating procedures and internal communication, which should be considered more carefully when dealing with sensitive b-to-b customers. As an example of these problematic situations, sometimes the same customer could end-up being contacted simultaneously by two separate customer servants. These problems occur mainly due the fact that the employees work from separate offices without a sophisticated task and customer tracking system. Fixing these faults would improve the efficiency of the workforce and reduce the workload of the management. One solution to the problem would be for example creating a companywide real-time

chatroom, where anyone inside the organization could be reached during the office hours, where new information would be published and the most hurried issues could be dealt with.

The freelancer status of the teachers may prove to be problematic in the future, as teachers may be unwilling to cooperate with each other concerning the sharing of their course materials.

As the website traffic of the commissioning company has risen significantly, other proven weakness has arisen due the usage of Drupal open-source content-management framework. While being extensive and scalable CMS, Drupal has a reputation of consuming a significant amount of resources, at least if not set properly (MCD Partners 2015, date of retrieval 25.04.2016). This can cause heavy server load, if the server capacity is not sufficient. Therefore, investments to more capacity or tweaking the performance of the design are required, in order to meet the reportedly increasing website traffic.

2.4.3 Opportunities

Due to increasing globalization rate of the world, economies have become more international which in turn could have increased the demand for foreign language learning solutions. The global economic epicenter measured by GDP has been on a course of change from English-speaking world towards Mandarin, Spanish and Hindi and naturally plays a part in increasing demand for education of secondary languages among English speaking or English-orientated regions, such as Scandinavia. Digital language learning applications and services have made the language education market more efficient by making it accessible on a near-global scale. Now the demand can meet a supply regardless of the geographical location. According to the sources of private market-research-company Sandler Research: "The Global Online Language Learning market is expected to grow at a CAGR of 10.04 % during the period 2014-2019" (PR Newswire 2015, date of retrieval 10.03.2016). CAGR meaning Compound Annual Growth Rate, indicating a steady and significant growth of the market. Due to the significant growth of demand for foreign languages in Asia and vice-versa, the author suggests considering the possibilities of expanding the business to the Asian language education market in the near future.

The *mobile movement* is a major ongoing phenomenon backed up by a Daniel Newman's data on US population (Converge.xyz 2014, date of retrieval 24.04.2016), meaning that mobile devices go

whenever people go, are always switched on and always connected to a network. People carrying palm-sized computers with them all day long, provides an enormous potential for product development and marketing of new products or services. Because of this, the digital education field has awoken to develop game-like mobile applications. For example, competitors Duolingo and Memrise have utilized these applications with great success. In order to respond to these trends and improve the efficiency of blended learning, an application of its own that would aim in a partial gamification of language learning should be developed or otherwise acquired by the commissioning company. According to Elizabeth Corcoran (Forbes 2010. Date of retrieval 24.04.2016) the gamification does not rely on motivation of students, but affects through an instantaneous feedback, a competitive instinct and rewarding even tiny steps of progress. In the case of commissioning company, it could offer a great addition and support for the digital learning experience, while encouraging the self-learning of the students and providing them with rewarding experiences. Even without assessing its value for actual language learning, the perceived value of such web-application is significant.

According to Google Analytics report of the commissioning company, observed in 15th of March 2016, over 35% of traffic on the teaching platform came from mobile devices, making a user experience (UX) of mobile users an important detail for the overall performance of the company. At the time of writing, a UX, defined as an overall involvement of the end-user with the company and its services (Nielsen J. & Norman D. 2016, date of retrieval 17.05.2016), of the digital platform was far from being a positive experience. Just by browsing the website and testing few different functions in less than ten minutes, author could identify numerous details to be developed further.

2.4.4 Threats

The existing market coverage of other digital language education providers has to be considered as a significant threat, which can be responded only by providing at a least service of similar quality with more competitive pricing strategy and outstanding marketing operations. High-profile competitors mentioned in the competition analysis provide language courses in-house with their own validated pedagogic methods. These competitors should be analyzed thoroughly hereafter, and some of their methods taught to freelancer teachers of the commissioning company, in order to achieve improved learning results and more standardized teaching methods. Therefore, attain-

ing teachers with history of working for these competitor companies could prove to be a valuable source of information and experience.

Information security is a major concern on the digital marketplace and the role of it will only increase from this point as the customer database will increase and amount of personal information will increase. For the commissioning company, this becomes more topical when the amount of b-to-b customers increases, as corporations of all sizes must and should be concerned about the potential risks that neglected information security causes.

The digital teaching platform, the website and therefore the whole business model of the commissioning company is currently completely dependent of technological knowledge, expertise and infrastructure of a domain provider. If something unpredictable were to happen to this provider, it would mean a full stop for the business. For situations like this, a backup plan should be conducted.

3 MARKETING STRATEGY

In this chapter the author defines the new marketing strategy, by stating the mission and objectives of the company, followed by the demographics of the target market and branding strategy for the new service. As stated by Kotler and Keller in the 12th edition of the Marketing Management, the marketing strategy part of the marketing plan has a function of defining the mission and the marketing objectives, with a description of groups and needs the new service is intended to satisfy. In order to ensure that the company can provide the support needed for implementation of the strategy, the inputs from all organizational areas have to be defined, as well as branding and customer strategies. (2009, 60.)

3.1 Mission

Mission of the commissioning company regarding the new service marketed is to enter the digital b-to-b language education market with customized digital language courses, encourage the customers for long-term relationships and become the service provider of choice for the European digital language learning market.

3.2 Objectives

The objectives of the marketing strategy are to raise the brand awareness, acquire a stable foothold among its competitors and generate trust among the stakeholders of the company. In practice, these objectives are to be met by implementing digital and direct marketing methods.

3.3 Demographics and target market

Before this plan was conducted, main customers of the commissioner company consisted mainly of private European students, with only few exceptions.

A target market of the new service are companies of all sizes from branches mentioned on a list of 20-target-branches defined in the fifth chapter and that require foreign language skills for running their current or future business operations. The potential b-to-b customers are generating

enough profit or have attained such an extensive amount of capital that they are able to invest in talent development through educating the existing workforce. The workforce of the target companies should not be too highly educated, which will limit the need for the new service especially in the high-end service industry, such as consultancy business, where people are, as a rule educated to speak at least two different languages. This hypothesis was backed-up by a preliminary telephone interview conducted on 19th of January 2016, where the author had one Finnish business developer of a consultancy company answering questions concerning a language training service.

Even though the language education service is held in digital form, according to experience of the commissioning company the customers have no need to be tech-savvy in order to be able to use it. In addition, the IT related problems are dealt by the customer service.

As mentioned earlier, the current marketing efforts are directed for the European area only; this does not mean that the company is unable to operate globally. Only definite requirement regarding the geographical location of the customer is that the internet connection is capable enough for a video chat between the teacher and the student, which is technically possible with download and upload speed of 500 kbps or higher (Skype 2016, date of retrieval 30.03.2016). In order to put the number into perspective: the global average of the world was 5,1 mbps in 2015, according to an American content delivery network service provider Akamai (Venturebeat 2015, date of retrieval 30.03.2016). Another reason why the geographical location or source and target languages in this case are not limiting the business opportunities is that the costs are flexible, based on a first-hand experience of the commissioning company. Language teachers that are willing to work with various salaries are of abundance all-around the Europe, making price adjustable with the different price levels of the target countries.

According to Kotler and Keller (2006, 263) the segmentation strategy of the new service, and commissioning company, falls into *product specialization*. However, instead of a typical product specialization, where company is selling a completely similar product to all segments, the new service was customized to respond the needs of an every customer individually.

3.4 Branding strategy

The nature of the current marketing communications towards the b-to-c customers in social media is aiming to be entertaining and informative, surely this will rise the brand awareness to some extent. However, the most successful marketing campaigns throughout the history have rarely been about promoting the product sold itself. As Michelle Greenwald describes the main attributes of effective advertising: it must be memorable, deliver a personally meaningful message, tell how it will improve life of a customer, stand for values beyond the service itself and be unquestionably unique so the advertising will not be linked to competing brands. (Forbes 2014, date of retrieval 04.05.2016.) In other words, pushing the product or service to the customers is ineffective, whereas pulling the customers towards your service, gives them an idea of superior quality, which can only be reached by an institution that is confident about delivering the superior value. This kind of branding has to be a holistic process continuing from the first impression to sales conversion and ultimately to word-of-mouth advertising.

People are constantly communicating with each other and stakeholders form opinions about policies of the company based on their experiences on whether the company is able to deliver what they are promising in a way that their marketing communications suggest or not. This is unavoidable and simply ignoring all the negative feedback will never bring any benefits for the future business operations. Bad publicity can be always turned to a good one, if conscious and systematic marketing strategy is being followed.

Josephine Hardy has listed in her blog four efficient methods for turning negative publicity into positive. These methods include the following: Respond to negative publicity, even if there are plenty of things to be taken care of, people just want to be heard and even a collective public statement can help to settle many wrongs into rights. The second method is vital for the perspective of Lean Startup development; collecting honest opinions about your products. The negative feedback is a free-of-charge research information. If certain matters tend to draw negative feedback cumulatively, it is highly likely that there is something wrong with the product or service and not with the customers. The third method she suggests is delivering an outstanding customer service, which is covered later thoroughly in the People part of Extended Marketing Mix. The last method is related to the collecting of feedback, as Hardy recommends tracking the sentiment over time with social media monitoring. By following the opinions of the general public, the PR disasters can be avoided before they happen and improvements can be made responsively

where they are needed. (Datarank 2015, date of retrieval 27.04.2016.) However, the best advice the author has heard so far about handling the PR and performing a successful customer service came from the CEO of the commissioning company, when he stated that listening is the most important ability when serving a customer.

4 EXTENDED MARKETING MIX

The Seven Ps, also known as the Extended Marketing Mix (Professional Academy 2016, date of retrieval 12.03.2016) by E. J. McCarthy, is a consumer-centric extension to an original Marketing Mix developed in the 1960's by American Marketing Association (Investopedia 2016, date of retrieval 12.03.2016), for developing and executing an effective marketing strategy. It consists of seven parts: Product, Place, Price, Promotion, People, Processes and Physical Evidence, in this thesis, used in a more specific role of discovering new marketing tactics for performing the market penetration.

4.1 Product / Service

The original idea of the author was to include proofreading and translation services to the new b-to-b product portfolio. Preliminary telephone interviews conducted in January of 2016, where twenty potential b-to-b customers were inquired about their views regarding the new service properties, the author revealed that the majority of the companies contacted already possessed an outsourced translation service and had no need for proofreading service, which led into a decision to a change of strategy regarding the translation services. According to a new approach the commissioning company has to build a trustful relationship to the b-to-b customer first through a few successful business transactions with language courses. The commissioner would then offer and ultimately take over the translation services from the competitors. After the preliminary results, the new service development in this thesis would only focus on developing a tailor-made and branch specific digital language training solution for the companies, instead of developing an all-around language service.

Based on the findings of the preliminary telephone interview the author designed and built a new marketing brochure of the new minimum viable product (MVP) (appendix) that had a temporary pricing and details of the new service. The new marketing brochure could be used in the marketing communications and for smoke testing prior to the launch of the new service. The details of the brochure were changed and optimized during several meetings with several commissioning company employees and the CEO. All the details on the brochure were that of an existing service, except the tailor-made field-specific course curriculums. However, based on the extensive

database of teachers, the author was confident that anything the companies would ask could be delivered.

New service properties are covered in detail later in the fifth chapter of the thesis, where they are allowed more space without interrupting the structure of the Extended Marketing Mix.

4.2 Place

Service will be available on the website of the commissioning company in the near future, the server capacity of which the author is criticizing in the SWOT-analysis, should be improved beforehand. As it is customary for b-to-b services, the service is not directly purchasable, but requires a customer to send a request for quotation. Best method to design this page is to include an online form with a simple graphical interface where several fields of information are required, potentially realized by using drop-down menus with pre-defined options, which can make answering the requests for quotations partially automated. Some of the attributes, such as group size, a target language, the one that a customer wishes to learn and a source language, one that the course must be held in, field or industry of customer company and the desired course ingredients will define the pricing and the teacher needed.

At the time of the writing in April of 2016, the multilingual webpage of the commissioning company has been translated in 14 different languages that all are located to subdirectories with the generic top-level domains (gTLDs), and more will be added in the future according to demand and in-house translation capabilities. The digital marketing materials of the new service, which currently exists only in English, have to be eventually translated to languages spoken in the target countries and in which the customer service have the ability to speak to serve the new customers with.

4.3 Price

Only element of the marketing mix that produces revenue is price, whereas all other elements produce costs (Kotler & Keller 2009, 431). Therefore, when considering the pricing of the new service, several factors have to be considered for reaching a reasonable and arguable price, which will both produce profit by covering all the costs and communicates the perceived value of

the product for the marketplace. Price of the service places the product on its position among the competitors and gives an indication about the quality of the service for the potential customers (Kotler & Keller 2009, 435).

In order to penetrate the digital b-to-b language education market as a newcomer, achieving the maximum market share should be the main objective of pricing strategy at first. However, as the b-to-b market is notably less price sensitive than b-to-c market, the ultimate objective should be achieving a product-quality leadership based on the idea of affordable customizable private education. (Kotler & Keller 2009, 438.) According to Gordon Wyner (American Marketing Association 2014, date of retrieval 09.05.2016) a pricing practice that emphasizes the value and quality of the service can also give customers an attractive reason to spend more in order to get a premium service.

On the situation of the commissioning company, prices of all the courses have the potential to be extremely flexible based on the fact that salary standards vary radically between countries of origin of both customer companies and teachers, even inside the EU. However, according to the preliminary telephone interviews all the customers, without exception, preferred a clear fixed pricing for courses, meaning that later it would be reasonable to adapt the fixed prices by demand of each target country. Same survey revealed that the potential customers also required discounts over the quantity of courses and it should be developed further after more information is revealed of the market.

After considering all the possible pricing factors mentioned earlier in addition to the standard pricing of the b-to-c courses of the commissioning company, a directional pricing system was developed as a placeholder for more permanent solution, which would reveal itself through trial and error and customer feedback. This placeholder pricing system can be seen from the Appendix at the end of the thesis as a part of the marketing brochure. As the service will become more standardized and quality of the teachers has been ensured by searching and attaining for new talent and possibly educating the existing freelancer teachers, the company can increase its pricing to meet the newly improved actual and perceived value.

4.4 Promotion

Currently the company relies heavily on digital marketing, through search engine optimization (SEO) and social media marketing. The nature of b-to-c marketing communications in the social media has been informative and inspiring, which is compatible with the b-to-b marketing as well, although the context of the communication has to be adapted to match the preferences of the target market. Later on, it is vital to create a social media channel for the new service to communicate with the stakeholders of the new service for generating new leads. Personal selling method will play increasingly important role hereafter, as the b-to-b marketing requires building of mutual trust and negotiating with the target customers, the personal selling will be performed through Voice over IP (VoIP) telemarketing applications, such as Zoiper. Various exhibitions or b-to-b trade shows, although costly and time consuming, would surely provide some valuable customers and create a positive word-of-mouth marketing effect, when the service is tested and developed to a more solid state.

The landing page for the new digital education service should be designed and installed on the webpage of the commissioning company with the following URL structure: www.commissioningcompany.com/professional or as an example for French language with a language-specific-subdirectory www.commissioningcompany.com/fr/professionnel. Geotagging the language-specific-subpages separately according to their target locations is not possible due the use of the gTLDs (Google 2016, date of retrieval 25.04.2016). Therefore, the use of gTLDs should be reconsidered in the possible future versions of the page for gaining higher level of SEO, from other locations than Germany as well.

Then various digital marketing efforts are applied in order to direct the potential b-to-b customers to the page and ultimately towards the sales conversion. These digital marketing efforts include search engine optimization through keywords, optimized design, unique content, social media advertising, backlinking through relevant bloggers that could be acquired by the existing affiliate program of the company and by performing a Google AdWords campaign, and can be therefore deployed with an extremely low-budget if deemed necessary by the management. Google Analytics should be deployed more actively than before for monitoring the performance of digital marketing campaigns and the traffic sources leading to the b-to-b landing page, allowing the management to allocate their resources optimally. Author also recommends of 301 re-directing multi-

ple URLs that currently are either non-existent or misspelled, as advised in Search Console Help of Google (2016, date of retrieval 25.04.2016).

Direct marketing should be deployed in the form of cold calling and direct mailing to companies in the target-market through the VoIP internet telemarketing application, followed-up by the advertisement brochure sent through email, with a link to the request for inquiry page. At the time of writing, the commissioning company has the ability to do sales in over ten different languages, which increases the reach of the direct sales method in great extent.

Author strongly recommends making a LinkedIn page, as suggested by Ian Forrest (Gravitate, 2015, date of retrieval 15.04.2016), for the company, for gaining a larger digital footprint. The resource and time cost of making one is not significant and it can bring some needed relevancy and trust for the brand. Then, as the previous employees link the new company page to their profiles in LinkedIn, the company gains increased visibility and attaining and holding talent will eventually become easier. LinkedIn is essentially designed for b-to-b marketing communications and therefore a natural platform for raising brand awareness and generating new leads. The recommended features of LinkedIn, to utilize for this purpose, according to leading coach Steve Philip are: posting useful content consistently through a profile of the company and into few relevant groups, to share new interesting ideas, to use advanced search function in order to locate useful business connections, to connect and communicate with other LinkedIn users and to monitor who is viewing your profile in order to locate new leads. (2013, date of retrieval 25.04.2016.)

4.5 People

It is always good to remember that marketing does not exist only to enforce sales with the external communications, but as a holistic entity where all levels of the company hierarchy must put in their best efforts to make the company what it aims to be. Business is, actually, the people who work for it and there is no way of escaping that.

As mentioned before the commissioner company employs about 30 people. Majority of the employees are working for the sales and the customer support departments, functions of which are partially overlapping. The digital marketing is the third biggest department in the commissioning company including the web designers, whereas the HR department consists only of two employ-

ees. An IT department only has one employee and on top of that, the company has two really practically orientated managers that take part in different functions constantly, when they have time from their managerial tasks.

Customer service is the cornerstone of the branding process, or even branding itself according to Andrew Sharpe (Retail customer experience, 2015, date of retrieval 26.04.2016), who states that the most simplistic definition of the brand is the expectation that a customer has upon hearing your company name or seeing the logo of your brand. These expectations in turn are often formed through experiences. Moreover, customer service is about serving the customers, who after all are the reason that the company exists, in a genuine, personalized and compassionate, humane way (Smaby K. 2011, date of retrieval 26.04.2016). In lean oriented development, the customer service plays a crucial role of gathering customer feedback. This first-hand information offers a voice of truth, revealing information about the UX and underlying needs of the market. Smaby (2011) concluded in her text that the companies should perform an overall shifting from an issue-centric customer service to a human-centric model of customer service, where the whole process is revolving around the customer instead of the issue they want the customer service to solve. Collecting and maintaining a customer database of previous communications would be a plausible idea of improvement, which could help in developing a more personalized service to each customer and even offer a competitive advantage for the business. This potential advantage is based on the fact that both positive and negative word-of-mouth effect is often caused by the actions of the customer service (Australian Government 2016, date of retrieval 26.04.2016).

Your brand is what your customers say about you. It's not your logo, your website, your copywriting or even your messaging. Sure, those things matter, but if you fail at aligning your brand's intention with your actions, even the best logo in the world won't save you. (Adii Pienaar 2013, date of retrieval 26.04.2016.)

When observing a skillset of the company, currently it has all its functions covered on a base level by the company employees and the management. However, in order to strive in competition of the market, the company needs to attract and develop a talent for improving the teaching platform and marketing operations of the company. The biggest areas of improvement regarding talent acquisition are the front-end web development, marketing and developing a pedagogical compatibility of the digital teaching platform, as a former education of the management does not exactly support any of the areas mentioned. As Dave Sorin, in an article written by Conner Forrest, recommends that: "executives and founders revisit their roles from time to time to make sure that

there are no "holes" present in the skillset needed to make your business successful" (TechRepublic 2015, date of retrieval 22.04.2016).

The commissioning company is a relatively young company, with a quite unconventional and relaxed corporate culture. This has some benefits and drawbacks. In authors work experience a lot of effort was put in vain, in projects that were not supporting the sustainable development of the business, but more to achieve a short-term growth of sales. A work that is lasting and important motivates the employees by itself, but also other incentives are required as stated by Stuart Leung in Forbes' article (Forbes 2014, date of retrieval 20.04.2016). The current management style of the company is to lead with example, communicate with the employees on the personal level and motivate them with goals achieved. However, there is a problem in having more than 30 employees and only two people in an actual managerial position, leading multiple business departments at the same time. The amount of time and effort required from the managers for micro management, human interaction and communication, is enormous and can affect business performance in the long run. Therefore, acquiring at least one new motivated manager would be important for the company performance and scalability.

Even though the teachers are contracted as freelancers, for the customers they are the face of the company and therefore important for the branding process. This is nothing new to the company in question but in b-to-b setting, the matter is emphasized heavily. Therefore, it is important that they have the ability to act as such. A skilled HR department could ensure this ability by seeing that the knowledge of the teacher is up-to-date and they have the enthusiasm and positive attitude required for providing an enjoyable learning experience.

4.6 Process

A service process of the new service is largely the same as of the b-to-c service, with some minor improvements. Whereas the private customer has to create a new profile before asking for an availability of a certain course, the b-to-b customer has to fill in the request for quotation form on a new landing page created on the website of the commissioning company. After the sales department has received the request for quotation, the most suitable teacher is searched from the teacher database, according to the target and source languages, industry of the commissioner and topic of the course. After the availability and qualifications of the teacher have been validated

through the information given by the teacher on registration and audio visual interview conducted by the human resources department before accepting the teacher to work as a freelancer for the company, the upcoming course is offered to the teacher found with a certain level of salary. If the teacher agrees, the quotation with a course details and information about the teacher are sent to the customer. After all the participants of the course have registered on the digital learning platform the customer service of the company will direct them to the right virtual classroom and give the teacher rights to manage the course and input different learning materials on the digital platform from thereon. The real-time online lessons are distributed through various audio-visual communication applications, such as, Google Hangouts, Skype or AppaerIn or through the internal communication channels of the customer company, if required in the contract. The customer service is ready help with any difficulties via free telephone and email service during the office hours from eight to four o'clock in the afternoon (Central European Time). Usually there is an option for students to withhold the payment until the first lesson is held, so that they can ensure that the quality of teaching is as they expected. After the course is finished a feedback form should be sent to all the participants, so they can assess the whole service, this collection of the feedback has not happened in the past and the author sees it as a vital function for developing a better service and ensuring the high quality of the teaching. The sales department should also contact the manager of the customer company that requested the quotation to follow-up and discuss about the potential future language courses.

4.7 Physical Evidence

Although the subject of analysis is a service by definition where the customer will receive individually customized language education, which will ultimately testify itself as improved language skills of company employees or management. A major part of the physical evidence is how the participants of a marketplace perceive the service, physical and psychological manifestation of which is the brand (Marketing Mix 2016, date of retrieval 25.04.2016). Therefore, the company has to able to transmit the idea of the supreme quality of the service through brand communication and marketing methods. These brand-improving methods could include professional design of the webpage, illustrated marketing materials and social media content, following the pricing practices defined earlier and the deploying of human-centric customer service methods.

The highest objective of branding is, in the case of commissioning company, that the brand name of it becomes synonymous with high-quality personalized digital training. If further tangible physical evidence is required, certificates can be composed for course participants, as certain level of language skill has been reached on Common European Framework of Reference for Languages –standards (CEFR) from A1 to C2 (Europass 2016, date of retrieval 22.04.2016). The capacity for providing the CEFR-standardized certificates can be expected to be required for the European target market and for the customer company management, in order to assess the process of their assigned students.

5 NEW SERVICE FEATURES

As mentioned in the Product part of the previous chapter, the new service properties were separated from the Extended Marketing Mix in order to preserve a coherent structure, due an extensive amount of space the properties require.

After other details of the marketing plan had been defined by the throughout analysis of the prevailing environment and reasoning, the focus of the thesis was shifted towards building new outlines of a ready and functioning service. The new version of the service would support the founded strategic and tactical plans conducted, the preferences of the potential customers revealed in the preliminary qualitative telephone interviews and answer to the new marketing opportunities hitherto revealed by the situation analysis. It has to be noted that although the validation of the service was conducted through interviewing potential customers, it would surely have been more efficient to perform a smoke test or A/B-test by selling two different versions of the service and monitor the reactions. In a more traditional setting, the product details would have been defined first and then the focus would have been directed towards the marketing plan, whereas this thesis combines both processes as an interwoven entity that result in a more holistic and targeted outcome. Part of the Lean Startup methodology, is continuous research and development, that will not stop until the product has reached its optimal form, in respect of the current environment, through series of small patches. In ideal situation, this way of thinking gives a product or service a prolonged life cycle, as it will adapt to the market and its changes. In another less optimistic scenario, the lean thinking gives the management a clear warning of a lack of demand in the market, allowing a change of direction, or pivot in Lean Startup terminology, in product development, before too much development has been conducted and resources spent for aiming at a fixed hypothesized outcome.

5.1 Name of the new service

A brand name of the new service was developed in a brainstorming session with the company employees, where the list of plausible names was composed. The original brand name of the b-to-c service is replaced with a pseudonym “Tradename”, in order to protect the privacy of the commissioner. The list included the following suggestions: Brand Business, Brand Professional,

and Tradename apt. or individual brand name for each target-branch-specific language course, for example Tradename Automotive, Tradename Management and 18 other names following the same format according a list of 20 target branches, defined later in this chapter. After considering all the potential names, a consensus was reached to deploy the name Brand Professional because it was more universally adaptable to all branch-specific courses as well as more internationally comprehensible than the other name candidates that were proposed. The word “Professional” could be translated according the target market, for example into “Professionnel” for the French market or “Profesional” for the Spanish market. Whether using the name of the commissioning company and b-to-c brand as a part of a name of the b-to-b service brand is ultimately a good thing or not, author cannot predict. However, some benefits of sharing the same first part of the name are clear: as it is definitely easier for customers to recognize the business-orientated, premium, service of the commissioning company because of the additional word in the end. In addition, by including the b-to-c brand name in the b-to-b brand should hypothetically increase the brand awareness and the digital footprint of both brands simultaneously when either one is being marketed.

5.2 Course materials

At the time of writing most materials or pedagogical methods of the language courses provided by the commissioning company have no common guidelines, as each teacher works as a contracted freelancer. This is not exactly the most recommended practice for the b-to-b service and the service has to be partially standardized in order to maintain and monitor the quality of education. However, not completely standardized since “In short, there is no one way to learn a language, just as there is no one way to teach it” (Marsh D. 2012, date of retrieval 28.04.2016).

The core of the new digital b-to-b language courses could be based on for example, a *blend teaching approach* and the most general and the most cited basis of most optimal conditions for effective language learning defined by Egbert and Hanson-Smith in 1999, referred by Marsh. These optimum learning conditions include the following:

1. Learners interact in the target language with an authentic audience.
2. Learners are involved in authentic tasks.
3. Learners are exposed to and are encouraged to produce varied and creative language.

4. Learners have opportunities to interact socially and negotiate meaning.
5. Learners have enough time and feedback.
6. Learners are guided to attend mindfully to the learning process.
7. Learners work in an atmosphere with an ideal stress/anxiety level.
8. Learner autonomy is supported. (2012, 1.)

According to Marsh language teachers understand that an environment that most closely resembles the use of the target language has to be created in order to achieve an optimal learning environment. Based on this, *the blended approach* is not a new concept for any teacher. However, what is new is the expectations of the students of using the technology in the teaching process. (2012, 2.) The digitalized education surely has its pros and cons but the fact that the world is digitalizing on an increasingly growing speed will bring in a great number of ways to utilize different digital platforms and applications in educational purposes. The commissioning company should follow these new educational methods closely, in order to support the idea of *perceived value* backed up by the students or customers. A concept of perceived value, as the name suggests, is a value not based on the actual production costs of the product, but the worth that customer believes something to be (Investopedia 2016, 28.04.2016).

As the author is not educated enough, in order to access the pedagogical methods in the required precision and understanding, personnel capable of doing such are required in the skillset of the commissioning company, as mentioned in the People part of the Extended Marketing Mix. However, the customized blended approach of the b-to-b language courses should follow certain guidelines, in which one-to-one online live lessons are held with specialized teachers and various self-study materials that the freelancer teachers are providing in order to support their teaching through self-learning of students. This interwoven combination of personal education and self-learning would hypothetically enable the matching of different learning styles, save costs and allow individually tailored learning, and therefore improving the overall learning effectiveness.

The course materials could include any form of digitalized educational material, such as Pdf or Word documents, PowerPoint presentations, educational videos, podcasts, FAQ directories, varying tasks to be completed between the students without the immediate presence of the teacher or varying interactive exercises, for which the platform of the commissioning company was designed to support. In order to make self-studying more flexible, these materials should preferably be downloadable and mobile-friendly and therefore usable even without access to internet. Addition-

ally Marsh (2012, 2) emphasizes the importance of motivating course ingredients, or tasks to be more specific, saying that this attribute is essential to language learning.

The commissioning company should hire few in-house teachers for developing the new b-to-b service. These teachers would be then assigned in creating a common stock of validated pedagogical material, accessible to chosen freelancer teachers and to provide the teachers with advanced digital teaching lessons or materials. These services do not necessarily have to be free of charge, if the process is planned and implemented properly. As a result, the commissioning company could also educate the freelancer teachers, which could increase the attractiveness of working for the company among education field, since all the companies on this field compete for the same stock of teachers.

As mentioned as a part of the situation analysis, the gamification of digital education is currently a major trend, especially on the language learning mobile application market. Since majority of Europeans have their smartphones always available, a game-like application designed to support the learning would definitely add the perceived value to the customers of the commissioning company on both b-to-b and b-to-c –sides, by encouraging the students to self-learning and making learning more enjoyable and motivating.

5.3 Course lengths

The course lengths of eight, 16, 32 and 48 hours are fixed so the teachers can design and prepare effective courses for these specific timeframes. According to first-hand experience of the commissioning company, the courses appear more comprehensible to students when the lengths are presented on a monthly basis. In addition, the fixed course lengths increase the commitment of the students and prevent them from changing the service provider in the middle of the course.

5.4 Group sizes

Relatively small group sizes of up to seven students are based on a first-hand experience of the commission company, limits of the software used for the online lessons and research findings of Janet Ferguson and Amy DeFelice (International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning 2010, date of retrieval 24.04.2016). According to their research, the inefficient teacher-

student communication of intensive courses can cause a significant drop in student satisfaction and perceived learning (2010, 80). It is natural to approach the problem by reducing the group sizes and therefore increasing the total time that the teacher can allocate to their individual students. According to the first-hand experience of the commissioning company, the dividing of the time of the teacher among the students is a prevailing way of thinking among the people who seek small-sized group lessons. For example, one hour of teaching for two persons equals 30 minutes of individualized teaching or attention per student, whereas group of 20 people, only three minutes are reserved for each individual student. Naturally, the situation is rarely as this in real teaching environment, but it still validates the hypothesis of favoring the smaller group sizes based on the perceived value and demand from potential customers. Studying in a group is not compulsory and a 1:1 setting, where one teacher teaches one student will remain as an option for those customers that are willing to invest more on their individualized language learning.

5.5 Selection of languages

Source and target languages can be chosen among approximately 20 different languages that the current teacher database is able to support. More languages can be added available on demand by recruiting new language teachers. However, new criteria need to be included for the existing b-to-c recruitment process of teachers to ensure the compatibility of the future teachers with the new b-to-b service.

At the time of writing, the platform of the commissioning company has been translated to support 16 different European languages, covering all the largest official languages among the 24 official languages in the EU, which officially remains as the target market of the commissioning company.

5.6 Specialized teachers

At the launch of the new service, the most qualified and experienced teachers should be searched either from the existing database of teachers or from the freelancer teacher labor-market. This process can be done on-demand after the preliminary agreement about the course has been made with the customer. New teacher recruitment has to remain as an ongoing process until enough verified and qualified teachers have been found to match the demand of the target

for each branch. In order to map the industry-related special talents and experience of the teachers more efficiently and in an organized manner, some minor updates have to be made to the database and recruitment process. For example, until now previous working experience outside of an educational field has been disregarded completely from the database and from interview notes. Now this experience cannot be ignored anymore, as it is the most tangible meter, besides the previous experience in teaching and digital education, for measuring capability of teachers to teach profession-orientated language course.

5.7 Industry-specific materials

The new digital language education courses are tailored for the needs of each b-to-b customer individually, firstly by an industry or a branch specific content and secondly by the topics of which more information is presented later on. The target branches were acquired by analyzing what the competitor companies were offering and discussions with the commissioning company CEO. Among all the possible industries that could have an existing demand for language courses, 20 distinct branches were chosen to serve as the preliminary target branches. In reality, the target branch label is just titular and exists to make finding the teacher partially automated. The teacher can be, in fact, found to teach any existing out-of-the-list branch related language course, if acutely needed. The following list of target industries could be also used when making the request for quotation form for the new landing page of the b-to-b service.

The 20 target branches in alphabetical order:

1. Automotive
2. Aviation
3. Banking and Finance
4. Business and management
5. Catering
6. Construction
7. Education
8. Academic English
9. Healthcare
10. Hospitality Industry
11. IT

12. Insurance
13. Legal English
14. Logistics
15. Maritime
16. Military
17. Pharmaceutical
18. Police and Immigration
19. Real-estate
20. Society and Leisure

5.8 Course topics

The topics of the branch-specific courses are completely customizable, as every course should answer the need of the customer. However, as an example and guidance, a list of predefined commonly demanded topics should be represented in the marketing communication located on the landing page of the b-to-b service. The pre-defined topics offer a solution to practical linguistic problems that any company operating in a multilingual setting could face. The example topics were attained through competitor analysis and conversations in commissioning company with freelancer teachers and the CEO. The number of topics was limited to 10, in order to cover the most acute problems and more are to be included after more information is revealed from hereafter.

The 10 example topics in alphabetical order:

1. Accent reduction
2. Customer service
3. Expressing yourself using the target language
4. Formal language, written and spoken
5. IT vocabulary for staff
6. Negotiating
7. Presentation skills
8. Pronunciation and spelling
9. Communicating under pressure
10. Technical or academic language

6 CONCLUSIONS

According to a definition by Kotler and Keller, the executive summary functions as an overview of the plan for the senior management and it consists of outlines of the plan, supporting rationale and operational details. In this thesis the marketing plan itself, explained in the previous chapters, works as a rationale and the rest of the executive summary was included in this chapter. Therefore, the main point of this chapter was to elucidate the practical tasks or outlines that should be completed in order to perform successful b-to-b market entry, or at the very least, a smoke test in a lean manner. To sustain practicality author compiled these tasks into two lists, divided on the primary and secondary tasks based on their urgency.

Primary tasks:

1. New social media channels, such as LinkedIn are required for the b-to-b service.
2. Marketing communication emails have to be created to support the direct selling function.
3. Pedagogical abilities of teachers have to be standardized through improved selection process for the HR.
4. Deploying of the human-centric customer service for the branding purposes.
5. Systematic logging of the feedback for research and development purposes is required.
6. An after-course feedback form regarding the quality of the teaching should be made a standard procedure.
7. The new landing page with graphical request for quotation interface required, preferably translated for each language supported.
8. The server capacity has to meet the challenge of increasing traffic.
9. Improving the UX of the digital learning platform for mobile users.
10. Internal communications in the commissioning company has to be improved.
11. Language level assessment (CEFR) by the teachers required for monitoring the efficiency of the education for the use of both customer and commissioner.

Secondary tasks:

1. Marketing requires more investments on both talent and operational sides.
2. Attending trade shows for generating new leads.
3. Consider educating a few groups of immigrants a local language as a PR campaign.
4. Collecting a more specific customer database for the improvement of the UX.
5. Educating the existing freelancer teachers should be considered.
6. Attaining pedagogical experience from competitors is recommended, if possible.
7. Recruiting of a new manager required in the near future.
8. Maintaining a clear image of skillset and the requirements of the company.
9. New, more targeted and accurate pricing has to be developed through A/B testing.
10. Utilization of the gamification in digital learning for increased perceived value.
11. Reconsideration over the usage of the gTLDs for a better SEO.
12. An expansion towards growing language markets, such as Mandarin and Hindi.
13. Include translation services to product portfolio later on.
14. Google AdWords and Analytics should be deployed and monitored actively.
15. First pricing adjusted for market penetration, later for product-quality leadership.

As explained in the Marketing Strategy chapter, the commissioning company should sell its service or MVP initially through direct sales, by cold calling the target customers and offering them a ready service presented through marketing materials prepared by the digital marketing department and tentatively planned by the author of the thesis. In the near future after the launch, the service should be sold through the existing website of the commissioning company, where the new landing page with the brand name of the new service should be created for marketing communications and sales support in order to acquire new customers. With the low running costs of the business model company is using, it can achieve a margin that is higher than the field average and therefore invest more on the marketing, sustainable development of the business and getting closer relationship with customers through human-centric customer service, which in turn should have positive effect on branding. Majority of the plan can be executed in few months' time, whereas some processes like acquiring a stable base of reliable, motivated and specifically educated teachers and sufficient amount of customers, will definitely take longer than that. As the commissioning company relies to problem detection method and lean thinking, the further testing and developing of the service should continue, immediately after markets have revealed new information. Also a smoke test could be done by launching a personal sales campaign to b-to-b customers and developing the service to meet the needs of the market through A/B testing, while

collecting feedback from the target-market through customer service and feedback forms in both b-to-c and b-to-b sides. When acting according to these advices, the company can optimize the service exactly the way it is needed by the chosen target groups and avoids making any unnecessary resource-heavy investments.

Branding of the new service and b-to-c platform is a perpetual process, whether it is conscious or not and the wheels of the PR are always rotating and the both entities are affecting each other in negative or positive manner.

7 DISCUSSION

The objective of the thesis was to determine a marketing plan and the required new service features that would allow the commissioning company to enter the European business-to-business digital language education market. In order to reach the objective the author applied, what could be characterized as, classical marketing tools such as SWOT analysis and PESTEL analysis for situation analysis and Extended Marketing Mix for planning the marketing tactics. In addition, a method that is more recent was used in new service development because of the corporate culture of the commissioning company, which highly favored the Lean Startup approach. By employing this methodology in the thesis, the author ensured that the further development of the new service could be easily continued from this time forth by the commissioner.

The Lean Startup method has received its share of criticism, mostly for cutting corners. Despite of this, numerous institutions of all sizes and in all fields use this method because it allows a continuous and thriving innovation in circumstances where resources are scarce and uncertainty is relatively high. Actually as to cutting corners, Jay Melone (Medium 2015, date of retrieval 28.04.2016) states that the situation is the opposite. While having relatively low costs monetarily, the Lean Startup method includes more work and involves more people, or customers, to the product development before launching the product than a traditional, so-called, Waterfall method. In this thesis, the data required for the development was collected preliminary through qualitative telephone interviews, however the author would never say that the research findings are perfect as they are or that the plan is complete as it is. More questions remain to be answered and new MVPs are needed to be run through the Build-Measure-Learn feedback loop in order for a truly optimized b-to-b service to be in its final state, if such a state even exists. This thesis, however, gives instructions on how to get started in the lean way and on which base the new service should be built. An implementation of the plan and a future research will remain as a responsibility of the commissioning company. The author sincerely hopes that the product is launched as described in this thesis and it will be developed by using the Lean Startup method so the follow-up would be possible afterwards and the hypothesis and efforts of the author can be seen in the characteristics of the new service and its marketing.

In an opinion of the author, the overall outcome of the thesis is excellent considering the fact that this was both the first marketing plan and the first document of its magnitude composed by the

author with both English and the standards of academic writing. The author is aware that there are parts in the thesis that could have been performed in a more thorough manner, yet the value that this thesis could bring to the commissioning company cannot be undermined.

To pivot or to persevere? The author will leave the question open, as it is always ultimately the decision of senior management to make.

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